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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the current status of civic education in the United States and the place of civic education in the current movement to establish national goals and standards for education. Most current reform efforts (e.g., America 2000) approach civic education by means of increasing the role of history and geography in the curriculum. Civics and government need to be established as core subjects in the curriculum. Advocates of national standards and national tests for achievement mention English, mathematics, science, history, and geography. They do not mention civics, government, or social studies as subjects for which there should be national standards or national tests. The new 700 page curriculum framework, CIVITAS (created by the Center for Civic Education), is described as one of the most important recent developments in civic education. CIVITAS (a Latin word meaning body, the body of citizens of a politically organized community and the concept of citizenship with its values of shared responsibility, common purpose, and sense of community) seeks to define the meaning of U.S. citizenship and outlines the civic virtues (civic dispositions and civic commitments), civic participation, and the civic knowledge and skills that U.S. citizens need to possess in order to live up to the ideals of democratic constitutional government. The CIVITAS curriculum is described and the role that it might play in current national reform efforts also is discussed. The CIVITAS table of contents is appended. (DB)

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ANALYSIS OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES:

NATIONAL STANDARDS AND CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE U.S.

BY
R. FREEMAN BUTTS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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ANALYSIS OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES:

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by R. Freeman Butts

What a time in the history of nations to be talking about the meaning of citizenship and the education required for citizenship! The subject is timely and urgent for the United States as well as for Eastern Europe. It is tempting for a historian to think not only of the present moment with its potentialities and its pitfalls, but also of that first great age of democratic revolution which erupted in the forty years between 1760 and 1800.

Robert R. Palmer, eminent Yale historian, argues that the eighteenth century revolts were all parts of a single democratic revolution that broke out in many areas of the heartland of Western civilization in Europe and in British North America. The first major upheaval was the American Revolution; the most extreme and violent was the French Revolution; and short-lived republics appeared in the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Hungary, and Poland. Each revolution produced its own agitators, reformers, and assaults on the established ruling orders, which had become ever more aristocratic, closed, self-recruiting, self-perpetuating, and increasingly more privileged. (Sound familiar?)

The good news from those days was that the American Republic survived without a successful counter-revolution, though severely tested by its Civil WAr. The bad news was that by 1800 the

democratic revolts in Europe had been rolled back and the established orders had regained power almost everywhere, as they reverted to aristocracy, monarchy, or empire. And the age of imperialism reached its peak in the 19th and 20th centuries.

We are now nearing the culmination of another great age of democratic revolution that began at the end of World War I, retreated for a time, accelerated after World War II, and is sweeping much of the world in the 1980s and 1990s. We must now contemplate how it will be in the year 2000. Will there be more and stronger democracies then, or will there be fewer and weaker?

Tempting though it would be to make historical comparisons between these two great eras of democratic revolution, this is not the place or time. Our task here is not primarily to review history but to consider how we can make history through the agencies of civic education. I venture only one historical generalization: One of the reaons why the United States managed to keep its republic is that many of its founders and successors held to their beliefs that universal, free, common, and public education was the bulwark of constitutional government and democratic citizenship. Needless to say, American public education has often fallen far short of the ideal in many ways, but the ideal has been stated and restated from the time of Jefferso down to CIVITAS (about which more in a moment).

Since we are here not to rehearse history but to make it, the sad truth is that civic education has been having a hard time in the United States and is even in danger of being sidetracked by the much heralded educational reform movement that began in the 1980s.

At the outset, I remind our European colleagues that education

is not embedded in the U.S. Constitution as an original function of the national government, but gradually moved from private and religious auspices to become a major function of state and local governments in the nineteenth century. The idea of a national curriculum dominated by the central government has long been an anathema in American political and civil society.

So we are faced with a persistent and now an acute dilemma: How can we build a national consensus concerning what to teach about the common principles of American constitutional government while leaving the education of youth to local, state, and private agencies? How to build political UNUM on the foundation of educational PLURIBUS? How to maintain a cohesive political union without establishing a uniform and potentially authoritarian school curriculum mandated by the national government?

Thus, we come to one of the more astonishing developments in the history of American civic education. In the past, the civic curriculum has usually been left to courses in English, history, civics, government, and other social studies. Courses have been developed by educators and textbook writers who devised materials that were (a) approved by public bodies such as local district boards of education or state departments of education, (b) operated under guidelines laid down by state departments of education, state, constitutions, state laws, and local legislation, and (c) influenced by electoral politics, special interest groups, professional and academic organizations, and judicial decisions by local, state, and federal courts. Not a very tidy arrangement.

Therefore, it is all the more surprising to witness in the

United States a growing campaign to establish national goals for education, national standards of achievement, and national testing of the extent to which student achievement reaches the standards.

Meanwhile, education has risen to the top of everyone's stated list of domestic political priorities, Republican and Democratic, liberal and conservative, business and labor, urban and rural, majority and minority, federal, state, and local. At the same time, the decade-long educational reform movement has finally begun to focus on the common core of knowledge and curriculum content that should be taught and tested in all American schools, a goal succinctly summarized in the phrase "what all students need to know and be able to do." Notable efforts by several academic and professional groups have been made to formulate national standards of achievement in such subject matter fields as mathematics, science, geography, English, and economics.

The most highly publicized disputes related to civic education have arisen over the relative emphasis to be given to history vis-a-vis the other social studies, and the role of multicultural studies emphasizing the contributions of racial and ethnic groups and women, which have allegedly been neglected by overemphasis on the Western cultural and political tradition in the required core of studies.

Two contrasting projects illustrate the point: (1) The Bradley Commission on History in the Schools, whose 18 members were historians in universities and history teachers in schools, argued that chronological history must be the core of the entire social studies curriculum and that history is the indispensable study in the education of citizens in a democracy.

(2) The National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools, initiated by the American Historical Association and the National Council for the Social Studies, consisted of 46 members representing a broad spectrum of academic disciplines, professional organizations, and public bodies. They argued that history and geography should provide the matrix or framework for social studies, but that key concepts from political science, economics, and other social sciences should be integrated throughout the entire social studies curriculum. They strongly stated the case that world and American history and geography should be integrated into a three-year chronological sequence with approximately equal attention being given to the United States and to major world civilizations. Both of these major commissions emphasized that their major goal was education for citizenship.

Similarly, the 1987 California Framework in History/Social Science largely adopted the central role of history, and the New York State Syllabuses in Social Studies of 1988 incorporated considerable emphasis on recurrent themes and concepts drawn from the several social sciences. The frameworks of both states have not only been praised as exemplary state curriculum frameworks in social studies but also have been targets of heated criticism on the grounds that they overstressed Western values and European contributions to human civilization and neglected or demeaned the contributions of non-European cultures of Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Rancorous public and academic debates have arisen over the values of a multicultural approach to social studies versus stress on the core or canon of Western values.

Enter the National Governors Association and the Bush Administration. At a particularly timely and urgent period of educational reform, the President, the Secretary of Education, and the fifty state governors have exerted their combined efforts to formulate and implement national goals for American education. On April 18, 1991 President Bush unveiled the report entitled America 2000, proclaiming that a decade of educational reform had ended and an educational revolution had begun: The time for issuing reports, making studies, and convening panels is past. The status quo is upended. It is time to transform America's schools.

The President's announcement was the culmnation of an "education summit" he held with the 50 state governors in Charlottesville, Virginia in October 1989. America 2000 builds upon the reports of the National Education Goals Panel instituted after the summit, but it makes no reference to education for citizenship except in quoting from the governors' Panel. For example:

> Goal #3 on student achievement: "American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy."

America 2000 does not attempt to define the phrase "responsible citizenship," nor do the five core studies include specific mention of civics, government, or other social sciences that are usually considered germane to and required for citizenship education. As a teacher of history for more than 40 years, I agree that history and geography are necessary ingredients of preparation

for citizenship, but I do not believe they are sufficient.

Since the issuance of America 2000, public debate has reached a peak about the desirability of setting national education standards and devising national tests to assess student achievement toward such standards. Several powerful business groups, concerned primarily with America's international economic competitiveness, have also advocated national standards and national tests of achievement. All mention English, mathematics, science, history, and geography. None mention civics, government, or social studies as requirements to be tested for achievement on a nation-wide basis.

By early summer of 1991 the general consensus of the National Education Goals Panel seemed to be:

*Should we have national goals for Americxn education? Yes

*Should we have national standards? Yes.

*Should we set national levels of achievement? Yes.

*Should we have a uniform national curriculum? No.

*Should we have a single national test? No.

*Should curriculum be developed at the local level using national goals and standards as guidelines? Yes.

As of this writing, America 2000 has favored the history-centered approach advocated by the Bradley Commission and the California framework. But it may be that the advocates of history and geography in the U.S. Department of Education are ready to give a larger place to civics and government as core subjects in the curriculum. A conference in Washington was held October 7th-9th on the topic "Improving History and Civic Education." Under the leadership of Diane Ravitch, Assistant Secretary of the Office of

Educational Research and Improvement, all of the state coordinators of social studies and other curriculum leaders were invited to "examine the implications of the National Goals and to develop a technical assistance network that will assist state and local educators to implement the goals in history, geography, and citizenship."

The prominence of references to civics and citizenship at this conference may be a positive development, but it remains to be seen whether civics and government will be designated as specific subjects to be required and assessed or whether the goals of citizenship are to be achieved through history and geography alone. One session was devoted to the topic "History, Geography, and Civics as the Core of the Social Studies," but later sessions on the training of teachers and testing seemed to be confined to history and geography. Fortunately, John Patrick attended and presented a paper at that conference and Charles Quigley has been conferring with Ms. Ravitch. They may be able to enlighten us on this development.

Whatever the outcome of the efforts of the America 2000 "crusade" by the Bush administration and the state governors, one of the most significant developments in the past five years of civic education in the U.S. has been the preparation of a new curriculum framework called CIVITAS, created by the Center for Civic Education. Several of us here at this conference have been active in the five-year project under the leadership of Charles Quigley and his colleague Charles Bahmueller. We have a copy for your inspection. Its bulk of more than 700 pages has led me to call it the "New

Leviathan," though it surely is not what Thomas Hobbes had in mind.

The genius of CIVITAS is that it deliberately seeks to define the meaning of American citizenship and outlines the civic values, the civic knowledge, and the civic skills that American citizens need to possess in order to live up to the ideals of democratic constitutional government. It goes far beyond any current curriculum framework, or any set of instructional materials, or any combination of textbooks in dealing with the meaning of citizenship and the education that must prepare for it.

The purpose of CIVITAS is no less than to formulate a coherent and defensible conception of citizenship that will be of use to those who are struggling to design more effective programs for the civic education of all American youth from kindergarten through grade twelve.

This goal explains our use of the Latin (now English) word civitas, meaning both the body of citizens of a politically organized community and the concept of citizenship with its values of shared responsibility, common purpose, and sense of community. CIVITAS attempts to delineate both meanings as clearly and objectively as possible as they pertain to the United States. [See the Table of Contents appended.]

In order to establish a solid intellectual and scholarly grounding for civic education in the schools, CIVITAS draws upon several academic fields, especially from history, political science, political philosophy, law, and other social sciences and humanities as well as from experienced professionals in education and public service. It outlines in detail the values fundamental to the civic

virtue, the common core of civic knowledge and skills, and the civic participation that are necessary to achieve the Goal #3 cited by the governors' National Goals Panel. Although drawn up independently and prior to the agreement on education goals, CIVITAS should be extremely useful to all parties now involved in the formulation of national goals, national standards, and national assessments.

CIVITAS does not propose a national curriculum and does not take a stand on national tests, but it was designed, developed, and field tested by many educators who worked together as members of its Framework Development Committee, its National Review Council, and its National Teachers' Advisory Committee, whose members together represented virtually all states. Thus, a wide consensus arose.

Professional educators in the U.S. have historically been opposed to national curriculums and national tests. On April 3, 1991 a coalition of fifty educational and civil rights groups urged President Bush and the Congress to oppose "the stampede to national tests." But the subject is less taboo than it once was. Increasing numbers of professional educators are calling for national standards that stimulate achievement but do not infringe on the autonomy of local schools and teachers. Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, Keith Geiger, president of the National Education Association, and other influentials have begun to think positive thoughts about a national assessment that includes a variety of measurements of student achievement.

Whatever the rhetoric of debate may be, The Center for Civic Education in 1988 analyzed more than 40 state social studies frameworks dealing with civic education. Major findings include:

*The question of what citizenship means was seldom addressed.

*Little was said about the aims of citizenship education.

*Descriptions of civic education as a subject tend toward conceptual fuzziness and diffusion.

*In only a few instances could a specific rationale for civic education be found.

Every topic in CIVITAS is treated from three perspectives: conceptual, historical, and contemporary. It asserts the need for civic education to be content oriented, value oriented, and skills oriented. This is made clear in each of the three major sections of CIVITAS: Civic Virtue, Civic Participation, and Civic Knowledge. It seeks to strike a balance between the civic values comprising the common core of democratic constitutional government and the civic values of cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. It outlines a desirable school learning environment appropriate for students holding a diversity of beliefs and outlooks and reflecting an expanding plurality of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious communities in the United States.

One of the most innovative aspects of CIVITAS is its advocacy of the idea of civic virtue as an expression of the overarching purpose of civic education. The ultimate goal of CIVITAS is to enable students equipped with the requisite civic knowledge and the skills of civic participation to make their own commitment, carried to adulthood, to the civic values deemed necessary for the nurture and strengthening of the ideals of American democracy.

The idea of civic virtue has a long lineage in the ethos of republicanism originating in the ancient city-states of Greece and

the Republic of Rome. At its core, civic virtue in this tradition consists in the admonition to place the public good above private interest. Corruption, by contrast, consists in placing private interest over the public good.

America inherited this republican tradition of civic virtue in the course of its founding, but the founders also drew upon the political tradition of liberalism, arising especially in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, which viewed the chief end of government as the protection of the individual rights of citizens.

CIVITAS believes that both the classical republican tradition and the traditional liberal view of citizenship are legitimate elements in the spectrum of American civic values and thus of civic education. One of the goals of CIVITAS is to achieve a workable balance or dynamic equilibrium among these values and to challenge students to engage in the rigorous intellectual and political process of grappling with contemporary public issues.

Civic virtue is described in CIVITAS in terms of civic dispositions and civic commitments. Civic dispositions refer to those attitudes and habits of mind that are most conducive to the healthy functioning and common good of the democratic system:

*civility
*individual responsibility
*self-discipline
*civic-mindedness
*open-mindedness
*willingness to compromise
*toleration of diversity
*patience and persistence
*compassion for others
*generosity
*loyalty

Civic commitments refer to the freely given, reasoned commitments of the citizen to the fundamental principles and values of American constitutional democracy. The fundamental principles are spelled out at considerable length in Part Three of CIVITAS, dealing with Civic Knowledge. They are:

*popular sovereignty

*constitutional government
- *the rule of law
- *the separation of powers
- *checks and balances
- *minority rights in the context of majority rule
- *civilian control of the military
- *separation of church and state
- *the power of the purse placed with representatives closest to the people
- *federalism

One of the most distinctive innovations of CIVITAS is the extensive treatment of civic values under the heading of Part One, Civic Virtue. Most curriculum frameworks deal with fundamental principles as outlined above, but few attempt to outline civic values that rest on a solid foundation of conceptual, historical, and contemporary knowledge. The term "values" in American culture and education often has strong and positive moral or religious overtones for a large part of the public. But it also evokes suspicions in some academic circles that it carries an unspoken conservative religious or political agenda, which can only be combatted by a value-free curriculum.

CIVITAS recognizes both points of view as legitimate subjects for study and does not avoid the concept of values, but prefers to focus on those <u>civic</u> values that constitute a broad consensus and common core of knowledge for informed democratic citizens:

*the public good
*individual rights
    *life
    *liberty - personal, political, and economic
    *the pursuit of happiness
*justice
*equality - political, legal, economic
*diversity
*truth
*patriotism

CIVITAS appears at just the right moment in the United States. Dare I say a "defining moment?" It is not hastily or precipitously thrown together to meet the new initiative from the governors or the White House. But it does respond remarkably well to the present stage of the domestic eduational reform movement as well as to the cravings to teach about democracy billowing up in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Finally, a few words about initiatives that are under way for Americans to respond to requests from governments and educators in Eastern Europe who are interested in developing their own programs of civic education for democracy. I do not assume that newly independent countries with little recent experience in democracy can simply be handed translations of The Federalist Papers or be given practice in TV campaign techniques by the National Republican Institute for International Affairs. But I do believe that CIVITAS could be useful in supporting the efforts of educators in democratic governments who are seeking to reform the role of citizenship education in their own school systems.

For example, the Project for Democracy-International, sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers and the Educational

Excellence Network could find prime use for CIVITAS as it deals with educators in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Similarly, as the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Peace Institute, Peace Corps, U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Information Agency, and the National Endowment for Democracy set about to respond to requests for technical assistance, CIVITAS could be an indispensible aid to them in describing the values of democratic citizenship as visualized and practiced in the United States.

As the Group of Seven industrial nations opened their conference in London in early July 1991 to consider what aid they could give to a Soviet Union in dire straits economically and politically, the president of Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel, argued as he had done in his address to the U.S. Congress in February 1990:

> "...it was in the interest of my country, of Europe and of the whole world to help make the Soviet Union a more free, more democratic and more stable place with the emphasis on democracy.
>
> "The experience of the postwar period has shown us that no amount of economic assistance will make a totalitarian country more prosperous unless it is also made more democratic."

A similar note was struck by the prime minister of Poland, Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, in a meeting of the Atlantic Council of the U.S. in Washington on September 10, 1991 when he declared that the success of Poland's radical economic reforms rested on a foundation of political freedom and that the commitment of the United States to democratic reform in Eastern Europe could be decisive. If these statements on the primacy of political reform are valid, there could be a pivotal role for CIVITAS to play in international educational reform as well as in American educational reform.

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